



Programs and Partnerships

Office of Environmental Education

Introduction

The National Environmental Education Act of 1990 requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide national leadership to increase environmental literacy. The Act encourages partnerships and builds upon long-standing environmental education (EE) efforts conducted by federal and state agencies, education institutions, not-for-profit organizations, and the private sector. The following summarizes the programs and partnerships that EPA's Office of Environmental Education (OEE) has established to implement the Act.



Grants

Each year EPA awards more than 200 grants worth between \$2 to \$3 million to support quality EE projects throughout the U.S. Since 1992, EPA has awarded more than 1,700 grants worth approximately \$20 million to schools and universities; state, local, and tribal education agencies; and not-for-profit organizations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and other U.S. territories.

The vast majority of awards are made by EPA's ten regional offices for grants of up to \$25,000, especially for grants of \$5,000 or less. EPA's priorities for funding in fiscal year (FY) 1999 are for projects that educate teachers, students, and community leaders about threats posed to human health by pollution; build state, local, or tribal capacity; use EE to advance state, local, or tribal goals for education reform; educate the public through community-based programs; improve teaching skills; educate low-income and culturally diverse audiences; or promote environmental careers.

Mission:

To advance and support education efforts that develop an environmentally conscious and responsible public and inspire personal responsibility in caring for the environment.

Goal:

To ensure that EE is a recognized and appropriately utilized tool for protecting human health and the environment.



Training for Education Professionals

EPA has awarded a multi-year cooperative agreement to a consortium of universities and non-profit organizations to deliver training and related support to education professionals nationwide. In 1992, EPA initiated this training program with a three-year, \$5.4 million award to a consortium of universities and not-for-profit organizations led by the University of Michigan.

Under this initial phase of the program, the consortium supported in-service training for K-12th grade teachers by developing resource materials, establishing an electronic database of EE information and education materials, and conducting training workshops.

In September 1995, EPA initiated the second phase of this program with a five-year, \$9 million award to a consortium led by the North American Association for Environmental Education. This program is called the Environmental Education and Training Partnership and includes partners such as Project Learning Tree, Project WILD, and Project WET as well as several universities and education institutions. This phase builds upon the work initiated by the University of Michigan consortium and focuses on:

- delivering training to education professionals through existing programs;
- improving access to quality EE materials by expanding links between EE databases and by developing and disseminating EE guidelines; and
- sustaining long-term training efforts by strengthening partnerships and building state-level capacity.

Strategic Objectives for EE:



- Increase quality and quantity of EE in schools by linking with education reform
- Ensure long-term effectiveness and sustainability of EE by supporting state-level capacity building
- Promote EE research that assesses effectiveness in environmental protection and educational improvement
- Effectively communicate to the public what EE is and why it is relevant to their lives
- Improve quality, access, and coordination of EE information, resources, and programs

Programs and Activities:



- Grants
- Training for education professionals
- College fellowships
- Youth awards
- Linkages with internal and external experts and programs

The consortium places special emphasis on tying EE to state and local goals for education reform and reaching traditionally underserved education professionals (e.g., nonformal educators, high school teachers, and educators who work with low-income and culturally diverse audiences).

College Fellowships

The National Network for Environmental Management Studies (NNEMS) is a fellowship program that encourages college students to pursue environmental professions by offering them the opportunity to gain a valuable educational experience while conducting an environmental research project. The program reaches more than 100 students annually at more than 400 participating universities. Each year, EPA managers and scientists design new projects based on EPA's priorities. In a field of more than 1,000 organizations, NNEMS continues to be named "One of America's Top 100 Internships" by the *Princeton Review*.

Youth Awards

The President's Environmental Youth Awards (PEYA) program recognizes young people across America for projects that demonstrate their commitment to environmental protection. PEYA nominees receive certificates from the EPA regional office that serves the community in which the project takes place. In addition, one nominee from each region becomes a national winner honored by EPA Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Linkages with Internal and External EE Experts and Programs

The Act establishes an external advisory council and a federal task force as well as a public-private foundation as mechanisms to help EPA develop lasting partnerships, leverage resources, and obtain advice from EE experts inside and outside of the federal government. EPA has also established an internal advisory board to facilitate communication and collaboration across EPA. These groups are described in greater detail below.

National Environmental Education Advisory Council

The National Environmental Education Advisory Council is comprised of representatives from organizations outside of the federal government who provide EPA with advice on EPA's implementation of the Act. The 11-member Council also provides EPA with important linkages to schools, universities, state departments of education and natural resources, not-for-profit organizations, and business and industry. The Council reports to Congress on the status of EE in the U.S., makes recommendations for improving these efforts, and works with EPA to implement these recommendations.

Federal Task Force on Environmental Education

The Federal Task Force on Environmental Education facilitates communication and collaboration among federal agencies and departments who have common interests in supporting and implementing EE programs. The Task Force places emphasis on supporting joint interagency EE projects that leverage both federal and non-federal dollars. Members include the U.S. Departments of Education, Interior, Agriculture, and Energy as well as the National Aeronautics & Space Administration, the National Science Foundation, and the Peace Corps. EPA serves as chair of the Task Force.

EPA Environmental Education Advisory Board

The EPA Environmental Education Advisory Board provides leadership for EE and facilitates communication and collaboration across EPA. The 28-member Board represents EPA's Headquarters offices that implement EPA's air and radiation, water, solid and hazardous waste, education, environmental justice, and other program areas as well as EPA's regional offices and research laboratories across the country. The Board includes an Executive Committee of Regional Administrators. It places emphasis on providing leadership within EPA, improving the quality of and public access to EPA educational resources, enhancing communication within EPA, and supporting state-level EE programs.

National Environmental Education and Training Foundation

The Act also established the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF) to encourage public-private partnerships in support of environmental education and to complement EPA's environmental education efforts. NEETF awards one-year challenge grants in amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000. NEETF also has initiated programs in Environmental Health, Business and the Environment, Volunteerism in Natural Resource Management, and Educational Achievement in the Classroom.



For additional information,
call (202) 260-4965 or (202) 260-8619 (grants only)

Or visit the World Wide Web at
<http://www.epa.gov/enviroed>

